I believe the simplest formulation of an essentialist view on sex is as follows: There exists some property or group of properties which constitute male-ness, and another property or group of properties whichconstitute female-ness, abbreviated as M-ness and F-ness. It is the case that these are mutually exclusive. For all x, if x is human, then x has either M-ness or F-ness, but not both, and not neither. What exactly constitutes M-ness and F-ness, I haven't a clue, especially in the context which they should be defined. Most importantly for the essentialist view, it is the case that one may eschew M-ness and take on F-ness, or vice versa.

~~I argue against this position very simply: by making an attempt to simply define M-ness and F-ness, which, by the nature of the biology and psychology of people, is impossible.~~

I argue against this position simply by attempting to define M-ness and F-ness. Human biology and psychology is very complex and diverse, a fact which has yet to fully implant itself into the minds of sex and gender essentialists. The method I employ to demonstrate this position is to bring candidate properties to be weighed, and if they meet a failure condition, as laid out as a derivative of the essentialist definition of sex, then they cannot be usedto define M-ness or F-ness. Furthermore, if there exists a possible property for M-ness and F-ness, being that it makes it past the failure conditions, but it comes into contradiction with another candidate property, then both must be re-evaluated. Lastly, because of the definition of sex I am evaluating, I only need think of one example of a deviation to disqualify a candidate.

The failure conditions are as follows:

(A) A person lacks both M-ness and F-ness as defined by the candidate,

(B) A person has both ~~the~~ M-ness and F-ness as defined by the candidate,

(C) The candidate is defined in degrees; gradation does not a property make, or rather complementary properties make. If M-ness is of a greater degree of P, and F-ness a lesser, or vice versa, it is still the case that P is shared between M-ness and F-ness.

(D) Derived from A~~ and B, generality~~, B and C, if a property is already assumed to be a generality, rather than an essentiality, it already fails as a candidate.

Intuition dictates that this analysis ought to begin with biological factors ~~first~~. Contained in this category, we have such candidates as chromosomes, skeletal structure, reproductive organs, hormone presence, breast type, etc., with reproductive organs and chromosomes being the first to come to mind for most people. Furthermore, in these considerations, I must state that I will not analyze some features as they ought-to-have-been, but rather how they are. I base this first in the fact that the existence of a knowable ought-to-have-been assumes intentionality in the construction of humans, which I do not believe is readily granted, and secondly that conceding an ought-to-have-been means to concede that the existence of deviations from some supposed norm; being as we are partially arguing about the existence of such a norm, I would do a disservice to my analysis should I begin with the assumption that it is fruitless and baseless.

Section #1: Secondary ~~an~~ Sex Characteristics

I chose to begin here so that we may discard many candidates quickly. In this list, I include skeletal structure, fat distribution, amount of body hair, and other alike candidates because all of them are a matter of generality and degree. Body hair is a notable example: it is the case that, generally, men have greater amounts of body and facial hair than women. However, this is a generality, not a defining feature. I may not, with any accuracy, look at the amount of body hair a person has and determine their sex.

This applies to any other such characteristic within my non-exhaustive list. As far as I know of them, all secondary sex characteristics exist in generality and/or gradation. Voice, height, skull shape, skeletal structure, and even other characteristics which were once thought to differ by sex, such as strength and intelligence, have no correlation to sex beyond the degree to which we ascribe them.

Section #2: Primary Sex Characteristics

This section is where most people focus discussion, and therefore where the most importance is placed. I believe, however, that the items in this category suffer from the same problems as those in Section #1. To start, let's turn our ire to sex organs. What seems to be the extent of organs considered is solely the penis and vagina. I am temporarily excluding breasts for simplicity, though they will be mentioned later. The attribution of penis to men and vagina to women seems fairly straight-forward. Could we have our M-ness and F-ness? No.

We have two failure conditions met on the basis of sex organs: ambiguous sexual organs, which are not easily or even possible to classify as either a penis or vagina, and the existence of persons who have both, i.e. intersex persons. For those who would bring up sucha word as "disorder," I direct you back a couple paragraphs and I urge youmto challenge your own hubris, that you are so wise as to know how humans, or a group of unique people in this case, ought-to-have-been. I will also mention that the ambiguous or dual nature of one's genetalia is not a source of any harm directly, so classification as a disorder is a dubious proposition at best. ~ when broadly applied

Maybe if we turn to the two halves that bring human life, the egg and sperm, we may have some M-ness and F-ness? Again, no, being that there are persons who produce both and persons who produce neither, nor have the ability to produce them, if you would attempt to bring up infertility.

What about hormones? They fall under the gradation failure condition. Actually, they fall under B and C, being that, to my knowledge, every human produces both estrogen and testosterone. Therefore, they cannot be our M-ness and F-ness.

And lastly, what of chromosomes? These are my favorite, simply because chromosomes seem to have a mind of their own when it comes to unique expressions. ~~Uber~~ Sure, XX and XY are the most common, but they are akin to hydrogen and helium: they're the most plentiful, but in the totality of diversity of chromosomal expression, they're only the top of the table of elements.

There exist a great many intersex conditions rooted in the chromosomes alone, with intersex persons having XXY, XXXY, XO, XXX, and many more. This list, furthermore, does not include individuals with a non-chromosomal origin for their condition, such as male/female pseudohermaphroditism, androgen insensitivity, de la Chapelle syndrome, androgen deficiency, and many others that would unnecessarily inflate this sentence.

The human body is, to say the least, inconsistent, and it tends to defy the nice categories which we tend to impose on it, same as many other phenomena in nature. I could go on listing all sorts of interesting examples, but there is a problem I have yet toaddress: I have only found candidates that have failed, but I could not reasonably exhaust every possible candidate, assuming I could even know all of them. On that point I agree. I don't have epistemic ground to say that there does not exist some M-ness or F-ness. However, I must ask, how is it that we even treat the ~~possible~~ existence of such properties as possible?

Section #3: Language Imposing on Reality

The first two sections were of some importance to demonstrate the lack of evidence on behalf of the sex essentialist position. While it is true that the kinds of traits I have discussed do express themselves such that they align, generally, into two groups (the word "generally" is even a bit too strong, I now realize), this is not the position of the essentialist. More importantly to the rhetoric of the essentialist, too, is the existence of these discrete, absolute, and unbreachable categories, for if it were true that there was some M-ness and F-ness, if it were true that every human has only one, and no others, and not both, then the existence of "deviant" persons, those whose identity does not sit comfortably with the essentialist, whose being is not palettable for them, is something they could simply call a lie. I realize this line of reasoning has little to no bearing on the truth of the matter, but I feel that exposing the motivation of the essentialist is still important to explain why such a poor view is so religiously held. Nevertheless, I digress.

I will state, as I should have earlier, that I do not have the burden of proof ~~in~~ on the claim that there does exist some M-ness and F-ness. The existence of these properties are simply asserted, not on any physical basis, as the previous sections have demonstrated, or have at least demonstrated to some extent. Even the biological factors to which essentialists appeal do not support their view. Though, it is my burden to say that it is false, not merely that I lack belief, and I do believe it is false. Funnily enough, I will be appealing to generality and gradation as evidence.

My stronger argument against the essentialist view is to argue that, by the nature of the human material constitution, we are ultimately relegated to be classified taxonomically in some form of gradation. I believe that to even say there exists such a thing as M-ness and F-ness first relies on the fact that we are classified generally into male and female, and it is from this general classification that the essentiallist argues their position. The essentialist argument first relies on these separate terms, these complementary and exclusive terms, which themselves are not based in such an absolute reality. In essence, the essentialist argument relies on some purely linguistic feature to ground such a hubristic view, the definition of male and female themselves based on generalities. The terms used by essentialists to argue their positions do not even support their positions.

Therefore, the essentialist definition of sex cannot be true.

Lest you think I'm simply favoring one definition of sex, I urge you to look back through Sections #1-2 and assert that I have not done my due diligence in evaluating the efficacy of the essentialist view.

Lastly, I did state earlier I would mention breasts, and now I have.

Appendix #1: A Method to Argue for Essentialism

I believe the most cogent argument for the existence of M-ness and F-ness is this: if we were to methodically strip primary and secondary sex characteristics from a person, they would still be considered, both by society and by themselves, as the sex they were before they were changed, i.e. there is some essence to sex independent solely of primary and secondary sex characteristics. I recognize the truth in this, ~~and i~~ but I see two problems: first in the nature of this essentiality, and what M-ness and F-ness would be in this view.

I will first discuss the latter on the basis that it will flow more easily if I do. I do agree that there is some persistent thing separate from primary and secondary sex characteristics, but I do not believe an essentialist would agree with what it is. I would argue that this persistent M-ness and F-ness, or at least our candidate for M-ness and F-ness, is identity. Furthermore, identity being this persistent thing has greater merit simply in that we know it does exist. However, although it does seem to mesh with the essentialist's concetption extremely well, I would be remiss if I didn't explore why identity is essential.

This essence is slightly different that what the essentialist is arguing for. Identity is essential in the sense that every human has one. However, it is not the case that the constitution of every human's identity is essential. To layer onto the confusion, each person's identity has its own essential properties, otherwise they would not be themselves. Ironically, identity as the single obvious candidate that is derived from this method is essential, but it is essential in two ways, neither of which the essentialist needs for it to pass the failure criteria.

Lest one thinks identity is sufficient for M-ness and F-ness, however, even despite is not being essential in the way that is required of it, it is the case that there are persons who do have identities separate from that of male and female. Furthermore, there is no singular defining trait of a male and female identity, but rather groups of traits that make them up. In this way, our candidates of identity still fails under A, B and D, being as it is a generality.

However, I will still consider this method as a good starting point for a more robust approach to the essentialist position, as any honest interlocutor would.